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HOME AND FOREIGN
BIRDS.

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ROUTLEDGE'S
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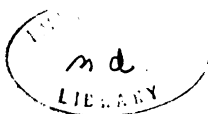
A BOOK FOR YOUNG CHILDREN.



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
THE APTERYX	82	THE LONG-TAILED TITMOUSE .	61
THE AVOCET	92	THE MACAW	73
THE BALTIMORE ORIOLE . . .	68	THE MAGPIE	20
THE BEE-EATER	54	THE MOCKING-BIRD	64
THE BIRD OF PARADISE . . .	67	THE NIGHTINGALE	58
THE BITTERN	87	THE NUTHATCH	57
THE BLACKBIRD	18	THE OSTRICH	79
THE BLACKCAP	59	THE OWL	12
THE BULLFINCH	26	THE PASSENGER PIGEON . . .	75
THE BUZZARD, OR HAWK . . .	7	THE PARTRIDGE	35
THE CANARY-BIRD	71	THE PEACOCK	78
THE CAPERCAILLIE	77	THE PELICAN	11
THE CASSOWARY	80	THE PEREGRINE FALCON . . .	47
THE COCKATOO	74	THE PHEASANT	31
THE CONDOR	44	THE PIGEON	29
THE CORNCRAKE	39	THE PTARMIGAN	30
THE CRANE	86	THE PUFFIN	9
THE CUCKOO	28	THE QUAIL	76
THE CURLEW	91	THE RAVEN	21
THE DIPPER	62	THE REDBREAST	15
THE DODO	83	THE REDSTART	60
DOMESTIC FOWLS	32	THE ROLLER	52
THE DUCK	42	THE ROOK	22
THE EMEU	81	THE RUFF	94
THE FIELDFARE	63	THE SACRED IBIS	90
THE GOATSUCKER	50	THE SECRETARY-BIRD	48
THE GOLDEN EAGLE	46	THE SKYLARK	25
THE GOLDFINCH	23	THE SNIFE	38
THE GOOSE	41	THE SNOWY OWL	40
THE GREAT AUK	10	THE SPARROW	24
THE GREAT BUSTARD	84	THE SPOONBILL	88
THE GREAT SHRIKE	65	THE STARLING	69
THE GREBE	8	THE STORK	89
THE GROUSE	36	THE SWALLOW	13
THE GUINEA FOWL	34	THE SWAN	40
THE GULL	43	THE SWIFT	51
THE HERON	37	THE THRUSH	17
THE HOOPOE	55	THE TOUCAN	72
HUMMING-BIRDS	56	THE TURKEY	33
THE KINGFISHER	53	THE VULTURE	45
THE JACKDAW	66	THE WAGTAIL	16
THE JAY	19	THE WOODCOCK	93
THE LAPWING	85	THE WOODPECKER	27
THE LINNET	70	THE WREN	14



THE BUZZARD, OR HAWK.

THE Buzzard is commonly known as the Hawk. It is a handsome bird, which is found in all large woods, where it makes a nest in the forked branches of a tree, or repairs the old nest of a Crow, by making it larger, and lining it with moss or wool. It feeds on birds, frogs, moles, or mice; but hunger only makes it seek food; for it will sit idly on the high branch of a tree for hours, watching for a Rabbit, or any small animal, on which it will pounce, seize its prey, and, without alighting on the ground, bear it off to the same perch. It is a great coward, and is often beat by the Sparrow-hawk, which is a much smaller bird; but it is a kind parent, and if the female should be killed, the male bird will bring up the young. The Kite is one of the Buzzard race,—the greatest enemy to the poultry yard, and so dreaded by the fowls, that when only a speck can be seen in the clouds, the watchful Hen knows it is the Kite, and with many cries collects her little family under her wings.



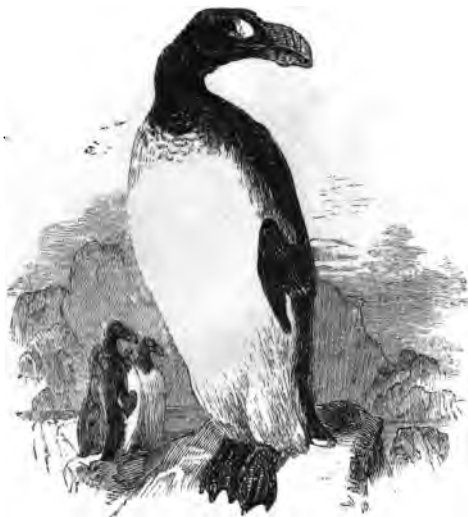
THE GREBE.

THE Grebe is one of the most curious of the Divers known in England, and is to be met with in the fens of the Midland Counties, and in some parts of Scotland. The legs of the bird are placed so far back, that it walks, or rather waddles, in the most awkward manner, and when it rests sits nearly upright. The feet are not webbed, and it uses the toes as paddles to swim in the water. It feeds on fish, for which it dives very boldly. On the floating weeds it makes a nest, which is often quite wet, but the bird seems to feel no discomfort, but hatches her four eggs in her little floating mansion. The flesh of the Grebe is fishy, but the skins are of some value, being dressed with the feathers on, and used to make muffs and boas.



THE PUFFIN.

THE Puffin, with its huge, sharp, furrowed beak, is able to defend itself from all foes. It is a sea-bird, common in the Western Islands of Great Britain. It is often seen sitting on high cliffs, from whence it dives into the sea for food, bringing up a large number of fish at once in its deep bill. It makes a burrow in the earth, like a Rabbit, with two entrances, to secure its escape; and in this it lays one large white egg; and while sitting on it, it makes a constant humming sound, which produces a very strange effect, as many of these holes are always found near together. The plumage of the Puffin is dark on the back, and white below; the legs are orange. This bird leaves our coasts in August, and does not return till April.



THE GREAT AUK.

THE Great Auk feeds on fish; it is found on all the shores of the Northern Ocean, and is sometimes seen in the Northern Islands of Scotland. Its short wings are of no use in flying, and its legs are so far back that it walks very slowly; but it dives well, and swims under the water, rising at a great distance from the place where it went down. The sailors know they are near land when they see the Great Auk, which never ventures far from the shore. The plumage of the head, neck, and back is black, and the under parts are white, with a white patch before the eyes. On the cleft of a high rock this bird lays one large white egg streaked with purple; and these eggs are so rare that they are much valued by collectors.



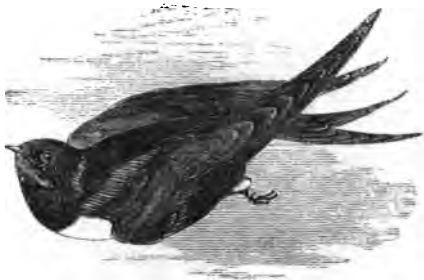
THE PELICAN.

THIS large bird may be very well known by the curious pouch in the lower part of its bill, which, though it is large enough to contain two gallons of water, cannot be noticed when the Pelican draws it up. In this bag it brings to the nest fish enough to feed itself and its young for many days; which suits its habits very well, for it is a very lazy bird. It may often be seen sitting whole days and nights on rocks or trees, without moving, till hunger rouses it to fly off to fish for food. The Pelican is said to live, sometimes, to the age of a hundred years; it is found in many parts of Asia, Africa, and America. Its plumage is white, with a tinge of pink, and the pouch is yellow. It builds on rocks, or on lonely marshes, a large nest of rushes and grass, and lays two white eggs.



THE OWL.

THIS curious bird is never seen in the day ; indeed its eyes are so formed that it can see better in the dusk than in the full light. The round face of the Owl is something like that of the Cat, and like that animal it has a great love for mice. The feathers of this bird are so soft and downy, that its flight cannot be heard, and it can surprise its prey without fail. It devours rats, mice, birds and insects, leaving the bones, skins and feathers in its nest ; which, if it cannot find the old nest of some other bird, is sometimes only a hole in some hollow tree, church-tower, or deserted ruin, where this solemn bird is often heard in the still hour of night, hooting and screeching in such a fearful tone, that the country people dare hardly pass its haunt. The Barn Owl is a great friend to the farmer, clearing his barns from rats and mice ; but because it sometimes takes a young pigeon, it is often killed, and nailed against the barn door as a warning to its friends.



THE SWALLOW.

WHEN we see the Swallow has come back, we know that it is really spring. When the snows of winter have passed away, and the sunny days of April arrive, the Swallow leaves the bright skies of Italy, and the palm-groves of Africa, where it has spent the winter, and returns to live the summer months with us. Then the air is filled with cheerful twitterings, as these birds busy themselves with building new nests, or repairing the old nest they had left the last year. The House Swallow, or Martin, builds under the eaves of houses; the Chimney Swallow chooses the inside of the sooty chimney, when the young ones sometimes fall down the chimney, to the great delight of children. The eggs of the Swallow are white, spotted with red, and the female will have two broods, of four or five each, in the year. The Swallow is an elegant bird; the upper part is deep purple or black, and the lower part white, and the tail is long and forked. This bird feeds on the wing, and is so strong that it will fly about for hours without resting, and swallow vast numbers of insects as it flies.



THE WREN

THE pretty little Wren is the smallest bird we have in England ; yet it is a hardy creature, and does not migrate to warmer lands in winter ; but stays with us, hopping about the bare trees, and chirping merrily in the cold and snow. It is a clever builder, and makes a nest shaped like an oven, with a small hole in the side to enter, lined with feathers and moss, and covered outside to be like the objects about it. If it be built in ivy, it is covered with green moss ; with hay, if built in the thatch of a stack ; and with brown moss if on a rock. The Wren will lay as many as sixteen eggs, which are white spotted with red ; and these eggs escape plunder better than those of most birds, for the Wren, like the Redbreast, has many friends, and few boys are so cruel as to shoot the pretty Wren, or rob its nest, because it is so trusting as to sing in the garden when every thing is covered with snow.



THE REDBREAST.

EVERY one knows and loves the pretty, simple, friendly Robin Redbreast, with its brown shaded back and bright red breast. In every country, the fearless bird finds friends, even among people who never heard the tale of the Babes in the Wood, whom the kind Redbreasts buried in leaves. In summer the bird lives in the woods, feeding on berries, insects and worms, but when the snow has hidden its food, it comes in a friendly manner to tap at our window, to ask for the crumbs we so freely bestow on it. It will even hop into the room, and eat from our table, cheering us with its sweet notes of melody. The nest of the Redbreast is built in a hole in some old wall, in the bank of a hedge, or in the ivy which clings to an old tree. It is formed of moss, grass and leaves, and lined with horsehair or feathers. It lays five eggs, of a cream colour, thickly covered with reddish spots. Friendly as the Redbreast is with man, it is not social with its own kind, being always seen alone.



THE WAGTAIL.

It is very plain to see why the Wagtail got its name. Every one must have noticed the active, lively little bird, with its pretty black and white feathers, running about to feed, and wagging its tail without ceasing. It is always found on the borders of some pool or brook; or among the grass in the early morning, before the sun has dried up the dew, feeding on the insects that hover about the water or the dewy grass; or sometimes it is seen running swiftly in the furrow after the plough, to pick up the worms that have been turned out of the earth; or swarms may be seen about the cows in the pastures, ready to swallow the flies that torment the useful animal. The Wagtail makes a nest in the hole of a wall, or among the stones by the side of a stream, and lays five white eggs, spotted with light brown. In the winter, we seldom see this bird; but it does not migrate, like the Swallow, for on some fine sunny day, you may see the little creature, running and wagging its tail as usual, and chirping its cheerful note as briskly as in the summer.



THE THRUSH.

As early as the visits of the first flowers of spring, the primrose, the violet, and the anemone, and even with the snow-drop, we hear the first pleasant, joyous song of the pretty Thrush; and that song is still heard till the cold blasts of November check it. No English bird has a voice of more power, compass, and sweetness, and for hours the bird will continue its strains, without tiring. The Thrush abounds in the woods, feeding on worms and slugs, and, as soon as they are ripe, the wild berries. It is very fond of a little garden fruit too; nor ought this to be grudged to it, for besides the music it bestows on us, it is of great use in devouring snails, and ridding the gardens of vermin. The Thrush builds its nest very early in February, in some leafless bush, and to guard it against the storms of spring, it plasters it with a coat of clay to make it firm. The young birds come out in April, the first children of the grove. The form of the Thrush is graceful, and nothing can be more elegant than the plumage of rich olive brown on the back, and the cream-coloured spotted breast.



THE BLACKBIRD.

THE Blackbird is very well known by its deep black feathers, its bright yellow bill and eyelids, and its wild and charming song, which, though it has less power than that of the Thrush, is of richer and deeper tone, and is heard from the dawn of day till sunset. In the early days of spring, when the bird is busy building, it is heard only in the woods, but as the summer advances, it draws near the gardens, and makes sad havock with the cherries. And, for this offence, hundreds of these pleasant songsters fall, every year, by the gun of the gardener. The nest of the Blackbird is very pretty and curious. It is built in a thick bush, or sometimes in the midst of an apple-tree; and is made of slender twigs and dried grass, plastered with clay within and without, and then lined with soft moss. It contains five eggs of a greenish blue colour, spotted with brown. Unlike the Thrushes, which live in flocks, the Blackbird is almost ever seen alone.



THE JAY.

THE Jay is one of the most beautiful of English birds. It is elegant in form, and brilliant in plumage. The back and breast are of a pale cinnamon colour; the wings are chequered with black, blue and white, the tail is formed of twelve black feathers, and on the head is a pretty tuft of black and white feathers, which the bird can erect when it chooses. But the voice of the Jay is as harsh and unpleasant as that of the Peacock, and it is much more noisy than that bird. It is a great mimic, and imitates every sound it hears; it will bleat like a Lamb, neigh like a Horse, and hoot like an Owl. It will even mimic the song of the Finches; and if caught and tamed, may be taught to speak as well as a Parrot. Jays are shy birds, and are seldom seen out of the woods, where they live many together, building their nests a great height from the ground, in which they lay their eggs, of a pale olive colour spotted with brown. In the fruit season the Jays will rob the gardens; but they do not often leave their busy colony, where in a calm summer evening you may hear them chatter all together, like a party of noisy children.



THE MAGPIE.

THE Magpie is a very handsome bird; its black and white feathers shine like polished metal, and its bright, sly eyes are quite piercing. Like the Jay and the Parrot, the Magpie can imitate the human voice, and may be taught to speak several words. This bird is so amusing that it is often kept as a tame pet; but Mag is a noted thief, and can never be cured of stealing any thing, however useless, that it can carry off slyly, and hide in some secret hole. It will even steal money; and besides its thefts, it will, like the Monkey, commit any sort of mischief; breaking and tearing any thing of value in its way. The Magpie builds a very curious nest, quite covered except a small hole to creep in, and over this it places thorns artfully woven together, to guard its eggs from enemies. These eggs are five in number, of a greenish white colour, marked with brown. Magpies are very social birds, and are always seen in large parties, chattering as if they were talking to each other. While they have eggs and young ones, they feed on eggs, young birds, chickens, or any thing they can obtain; but when they have sent the young birds off, they become very useful, devouring millions of insects and worms.



THE RAVEN.

THIS large bird is now very rare in England. It is more than two feet long; its plumage is a glossy blue black, the bill and legs are also black. It builds a nest in high trees or rocks, out of the reach of intruders, and lays four or five eggs of a pale green colour, spotted with brown. The Raven is said to live to a hundred years, and a pair of birds will return to the same nest, year after year, for a man's lifetime. No kind of animal food comes amiss to this bird; it devours Chickens, Hares, Lambs and Rabbits, and will even eat the putrid bodies of dead animals. When it desires to destroy a Lamb, it begins by picking out its eyes. Though it is so cruel and greedy, the Raven is often kept in the house or stables, where it learns to speak, to fetch and carry, and to play many clever tricks. It becomes very fond of the house and the people who feed it, but it is always thievish and mischievous, like all the Pie tribe.



THE ROOK.

THE Rook is a common and well-known bird, building its nest in some grove of tall trees, near a house, for it loves the company of man. Numbers of these birds build near together, and form what is called a Rookery. Every spring they assemble at the same place, and begin, with much noise of cawing, to repair the old nests or build new ones. So much do these birds become a part of the family, that it is said, if the house be deserted or pulled down, all the Rooks forsake the place. A Rook is seldom or never seen alone; the birds set out in the morning in flocks, and return in the evening to their nests in flocks. They feed on the worms and grubs turned up by the plough, and on many insects that destroy the farmer's crops; but will also sometimes rob him of a little grain. The eggs of the Rook are pale green, marked with dark brown.



THE GOLDFINCH.

THIS bird is often called the Thistle Finch, because it is so fond of feeding on the downy seed of the thistle; and on moors or barren commons where thistles abound, the Goldfinch is always found; and you may see flocks of the bright little creatures, feeding on their favourite food. Of all the Finch tribe this bird is the most elegant in form, and the most brilliant in plumage. It is so small that it does not weigh more than half an ounce; the bill is pale yellow, and the whole body marked with bright red, gold colour, black and white, so prettily, that no wonder the bird, like a little coxcomb, loves to see itself in a mirror. The Goldfinch builds a very pretty, neat, round nest of fine moss, lined with wool and thistle down, and placed at a good height from the ground in some fruit-tree. The eggs are five in number, and are grey, spotted at the broad end with purple. The notes of the Goldfinch in a state of nature are low and sweet; but when tamed, it mimics the note of any bird it is near very correctly, even that of the Canary. It is so gentle and docile that it is often a pet cage bird, is easily taught pretty tricks, and seems very happy in its prison.



THE SPARROW.

AT every season of the year, and in every place, the pert little brown Sparrow may be seen, and it is always at home: in the busy streets of London, or in the fold-yard of the farm; eating with the Hog at its dirty trough, or with the proud Eagle at the Zoological Gardens, it is always at ease, and without fear. It is one of the boldest of the small birds; it will fight with birds much larger than itself, and two sparrows will fight with as much anger as Game Cocks; but the Hen Sparrow is a very tender mother. The Sparrow builds under the eaves of houses, in holes in the roof, in old walls, or even in trees, if the place be snug and safe. Sometimes it will build under the nest of the Rook a rude nest of hay, straw, and twigs, lined with feathers; it has two broods in the year, of five or six white eggs, spotted with brown. It feeds chiefly on worms and caterpillars, a great benefit to the farmer and the gardener, for a pair of Sparrows will destroy many thousand caterpillars in a week; but they are also very fond of corn, and it is said every Sparrow will eat a bushel of corn in the season.



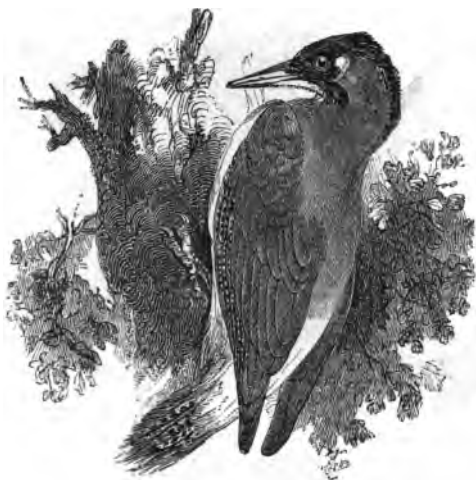
THE SKYLARK.

AS soon as the sun rises, the Skylark may be seen springing from its low nest, which is made of dry stalks, and lined with fine grass, and which is always on the ground, under some tuft of grass, in a furrow, or even in the deep print left by the foot of a horse. It begins to rise in a straight direction, and sings as it ascends; its trills become louder and louder as it gets higher, till we lose sight of the bird, and no longer hear its sweet morning hymn. After a pause, it again appears and descends with a richer, fuller swell of music down to its nest and mate. The Lark is known by its very long hind toe; it is a plain brown bird, the breast is lighter than the rest of the body, with dark streaks. It feeds on seeds and insects, and never perches on a tree, but hops among the grass, where it is not well seen, from its dusky plumage. In the autumn, when the Larks are fat with stolen corn, vast numbers are caught in nets to be eaten; which is but a cruel return for their music. The eggs, which are four in number, are of a dusky white colour, with deep brown spots.



THE BULLFINCH.

THE Bullfinch is not a well-shaped bird, for it has too large a head, and too thick a neck, but its plumage is very pretty, and its voice is very powerful. Its own notes are low and feeble, but it may be taught to whistle, or pipe, as it is called, with all the power and sweetness of a flute. It is kept in a dark room, and just after it is fed some tune is played on a bird-organ, or flageolet, and in a very short time the bird learns the tune correctly; and if well fed, will pipe all day long, and be very cheerful in its cage. But when wild, the Bullfinch is very shy, and is seldom seen; building in thick woods, or hedges, as near as is safe to a garden or orchard; for it feasts, in the early summer, on the young bloom buds of the fruit, and causes much mischief. Its nest is built of twigs, and the eggs are four in number, of a pale blue colour, with brown and red spots. The Bullfinch has a short thick black bill, the back is grey, the under part, the cheeks and wings, are red, and the crown of the head and the tail are black.



THE WOODPECKER.

IN the still, thick wood, the curious Woodpecker may often be heard tapping the hollow tree to obtain the insects on which it feeds. God has formed the bird for its singular habits. Its bill is long, sharp, and wedge-shaped, and its hooked claws serve to cling to the tree, while it swings its body against it. It taps the tree to shake the insects from the inside, then thrusts its sharp tongue into some crevice of the trunk, and as the tongue is horny and barbed at the end, and is covered with a sort of gum, it secures a vast number of insects and their eggs. The Woodpecker does not build a nest, but makes a round hole in the decayed trunk of a tree, where it lays five or six beautiful white eggs, half transparent, which have nothing to keep them warm but the parent birds, which sit over them in turns. This bird is about the size of the Jay, of a greenish colour, and the top of the head crimson; its plumage is very pretty, but its voice is harsh.



THE CUCKOO.

WHAT pleasure we feel when on some fine sunny evening at the end of April we first hear the curious voice of the stranger Cuckoo! We then believe that spring has really come, and look about for the cowslips. All through the merry month of May we hear the cheerful cry, but in June it gets fainter and fainter every day, till at length we hear it no more, and no one can say where the vagrant songster has fled. The Cuckoo is a pretty dove-coloured bird; its breast is white, spotted with brown, and the bill is black, strong and curved. It is a great glutton, and devours a vast number of the large hairy caterpillars. It is a very shy bird, sitting in some thick bush or tree, and is rarely seen, even on the wing. It never takes the trouble to build a nest, but lays one egg in the nest of some other bird, often in that of the Hedge-Sparrow; and then flies off, leaving the poor Sparrow to hatch the egg, and feed the young Cuckoo, which, as soon as it is strong enough, turns the little Sparrows out of the nest, that it may have more room and more food itself.



THE PIGEON.

THE Pigeon or Dove, of many kinds, is found in every part of the known world, and in every place is valued, for its love for its mate, for its useful services while living, and for its use as food when dead. The Stock Dove is the parent of all our tame Pigeons, and it is said the Roman Conquerors first taught the Ancient Britons to build dove-cotes, and fill them with the wild birds of the woods. The Stock Dove builds in the holes of rocks, or trees; the Ring Dove on the branches: this bird has a black ring edged with white round its neck. It lays two white eggs; it feeds its young longer than is common with birds. The Turtle is well known for its great love for its mate, and, like all the Wood Pigeons, fills the woods with its pretty notes all the warm months of the year. Of the Domestic Pigeons there are many kinds: the Pouter, with its large breast, the Tumbler, which turns over and over as it flies, and the curious and useful Carrier Pigeon.



THE PTARMIGAN.

THE Ptarmigan is found on the top of some of the mountains of Scotland, and is very common in the northern countries of Europe and America. It is thickly covered with hair-like feathers down to its feet ; this plumage is in summer an ash grey, tinged with brown and black, which so closely resembles the moss-covered rocks on which it lives, that it escapes notice ; and by a happy arrangement of Providence, the whole of the feathers become pure white in winter, so that the bird cannot be seen among the snow. The Ptarmigan is a delicate bird, its flesh has much of the flavour of the Grouse ; very great numbers are annually brought over from the North of Europe, especially from Norway and Sweden, to be sold in England.—Twenty-four thousand of these birds have been exported at one time to London, and there sold to various poulterers. It feeds on seeds, young buds, or berries, and makes on the ground a rude nest, which contains from ten to fourteen eggs of a dusky colour, spotted with brown.



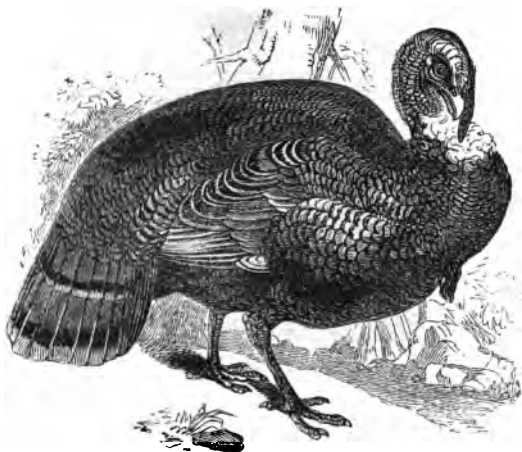
THE PHEASANT.

IF the Peacock be monarch of the poultry-yard, we may call the Pheasant lord of the woods, from its graceful form, its superb plumage, and the care and attention it receives from man. This noble creature was first brought here from Asia; but is now numbered among our native birds. Its feathers are shaded gold colour, green, blue, and rich ruby colour, set off with black-spots. Its tail is very long and graceful, and its keen eye has round it a circle of bright scarlet. The wings of this bird are so short that it cannot fly far without rest; it roosts at night on some tall larch or fir, and in the day seeks the shelter of the woods, among brambles, ferns or long grass, feeding early in the morning and late at night on green corn, acorns, berries or insects. It makes a nest on the ground, and lays from twelve to fifteen eggs of an olive colour. Pheasants are sometimes brought up in the poultry-yard, but they are so timid that at the least alarm they fly off to the woods.



DOMESTIC FOWLS.

WE need not say much to describe this pretty group of the well known Domestic Fowls. You see them sometimes shut up in a narrow coop, feasted to fatten them for the table; sometimes they are strutting about happily in an elegant poultry-yard. You see them rioting in plenty in the busy farm-yard, or picking up a few scanty grains in the dirty street before the dwelling of their owner: every where you meet these useful creatures. The different kinds of these fowls that are now common will surprise you. First you have the pompous, huge Cochin China, tall, showy, clumsy and quiet; the handsome black Spanish Fowl, with their satin-like feathers, and white ears; the little, pompous, strutting Bantam, with its feathered legs and its fiery nature; and the useful Dorking, large and delicate for the table. These are all easily fed, and repay their owners by the eggs they produce. The Cock is always more brilliant in plumage than the Hen; and seems proud of it.



THE TURKEY.

THIS fine large bird was first brought to England from America, where the Wild Turkey, in its native woods, is much larger than our Domestic Turkey, and has some curious habits in searching for food. Every year in October, before the seeds and fruits fall from the trees, large flocks of wild Turkeys set out for the rich low lands on the shores of the river Ohio; crossing rivers on the wing, and never turning aside till they reach the land of plenty, where they feast and fatten, and are killed by the Indians. The Wild Turkey makes a nest in some piece of decayed wood, but always in a dry place, where it lays twelve or fifteen eggs, which it never leaves till they are hatched, and is then a most tender mother. The Domestic Turkey is of much value as an article of food, and hundreds are fattened in Norfolk and sent to every part of England at Christmas. The Turkey Cock is a noisy, vain, ugly bird, easily roused to anger, when it will pursue and frighten smaller birds, or even children; but it is a very great coward when attacked, or when alarmed at the sight of a red rag.



THE GUINEA-FOWL.

THE pretty Guinea-fowl, though it is never kept for profit, is a great ornament to a good poultry-yard; and, though it is a sad rambler, it looks pretty on the green lawn of a mansion. Its small head and arched back, and its curious mottled black and white plumage, make it quite unlike any other fowl. It runs very swiftly, like the Partridge, and will perch on trees; but its wings are so short that it cannot make a long flight. The Guinea-fowl was, very long ago, brought here from Africa, and we now look on it as an English fowl. Among the Romans, the Guinea-fowl was always served up at feasts, and it is a favourite dish here, when game cannot be had, as the flesh is much like that of the Pheasant. The eggs are small, and very delicate, but are often lost, for the bird makes its nest in a bank or hedge, rather than the poultry-yard: it is too restless to hatch its own eggs, which are placed under a hen, who patiently sits a month before the little chicks come out. The harsh, loud, ceaseless cry of this fowl consists of two notes, which sound like "Come back! Come back!"



THE PARTRIDGE.

THE Partridge is one of the birds taken great care of in England, and called "Game." It builds a very simple nest of dry leaves and grass in some hollow of the ground, among clover, long grass, or corn, and there lays as many as twenty eggs; so that though many eggs are broken by the farmer, and many birds destroyed by Weasels, Foxes, and poachers, there are still numbers left for the sportsman to shoot in September. The Partridge is a very tender mother, and, even before the eggs are hatched, has been known to remove them, one after another, to a place of safety when it saw a plough coming near. Both the old birds lead out the young, and teach them to find their food, and if any danger is at hand the male bird will run along the ground feebly, with his wing hanging down, crying out as if wounded, to draw the enemy away, till the mother can get the young ones off. Partridges live together in families, called "coveys," and at night gather into a circle, with their heads outside, that they may hear if any danger be near.



THE GROUSE.

GROUSE are the most highly prized of any of the birds called "Game;" they are only found on mountains, moors, or wild commons, chiefly in Scotland and the North of England; they are most delicate food, the flesh having the flavour of the heath on which the birds feed. The bill of the Grouse is short, arched, and very strong. The plumage is a rich brown, mottled with paler spots, the lower part and the tail black, except four of the tail feathers, which are crossed with red; and over the eye is a rough bare scarlet spot; as winter draws on, the legs become feathered. These birds are very wild and shy, they live in flocks called "packs," form their nests, like the Partridge, on the ground, and lay from eight to ten eggs. They feed on wild berries, and the buds of the heath, and if they are near a farm will rob the corn-fields. The Black Grouse are chiefly found in the Highlands of Scotland, and are much larger than the Red Grouse, being nearly two feet in length.



THE HERON.

THE Heron is the last of the large wild birds which in the old times were common in England ; it was in those days a favourite sport to chase the Heron with trained Falcons ; but, except being teased by the Magpie and Crow, it now seems to live a very quiet life. These birds, like the Rooks, are fond of living in flocks, and build their nests on high trees near each other. The nest is made of sticks, rushes and grass, and contains five pale green eggs. This bird is about three feet in length, the bill is longer than the head, and the wings when spread measure five feet ; with these strong wings the heavy bird can fly to a very great height. The Heron lives on fish, which it swallows whole, and in great numbers ; it can neither swim nor dive, but it wades into the water as far as its long legs will carry it in safety, and stands as still as possible, watching with great patience for hours, till a Fish or a Frog comes within its reach, when it darts its sharp bill into its prey, and seldom fails to secure it.



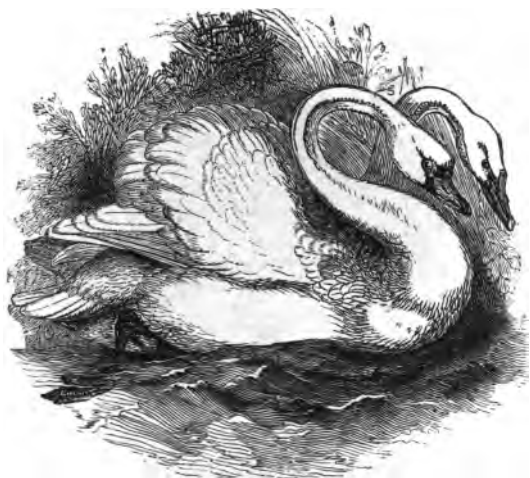
THE SNIPE.

THE Snipe, though but a little creature, is of some value for the table, as it is delicate food, and numbers are shot at the end of autumn, when they have become fat. It is a graceful-looking bird, though its bill is rather too long; the pretty dark brown head and black body are striped with orange, the breast is white, and the tail of a greenish shade. In summer the Snipe is seen on moors and mountains by the side of some small lake, pecking away at the small red worms which are its food, and which it pierces with its sharp-pointed tongue. It builds a nest of dry grass and feathers, under the stump of some old willow, and lays four eggs of a dusky olive colour, spotted with brown. It is easily alarmed, and then soars up to a great height, making a shrill, bell-like cry, and when returning to its nest, darts down like lightning. In winter, the Snipe seeks marshes, to hide among the rushes, where it is often devoured by its great enemy the Hawk.



THE CORNCRAKE.

WHEN the pleasant month of May brings the sweet hawthorn blossoms and the yellow cowslips, before even the Cuckoo visits us, we hear among the grass the odd grating cry of the Corncrake, or Land-rail, as it is sometimes called. Few people ever see it; it is only the curious boy who loves to watch the habits of birds, that at length gets a glimpse of the little, shy, long-legged creature running very swiftly among the long grass or corn, and is able to mark its black head, speckled plumage, and short tail. It trusts to its legs in danger, and is very seldom seen on the wing; and is not very easy to shoot, from the habit of making its escape by threading its way rapidly through the grass. If the sportsman comes near it, it will lie down and seem to be dead, to put him off his guard; then rise up, and run along so swiftly that it is soon out of sight. The Corncrake makes a nest of hay in a hollow in the ground, and lays ten or twelve eggs, of a dun colour, with dark spots; this bird chiefly feeds on snails and grubs.



THE SWAN.

THE Swan is the largest of the web-footed fowls ; and one of the largest birds we have in England. It is never kept for use ; the Cygnet, as the young Swan is called, only is used for food, and that but as a feast-day dish. In the small lake of a park, or on a smooth river, this graceful creature, with its pure white plumage, and its long arched neck, sailing proudly along, is a beautiful sight, though the bird is very awkward out of the water. It builds its nest in the banks of the water ; or on some small island, where it can feed on the water-plants, or on Frogs and Insects ; in this nest it lays six or seven greenish white eggs, on which it sits patiently for two months before the young Cygnets come out ; it nurses them with great care, teaching them to swim, and carrying them on its back when the stream is too strong for them. The Swan so seldom makes its voice heard that it has been called the Mute Swan ; it is a gentle creature, and will come to be fed by the hand of its friends.



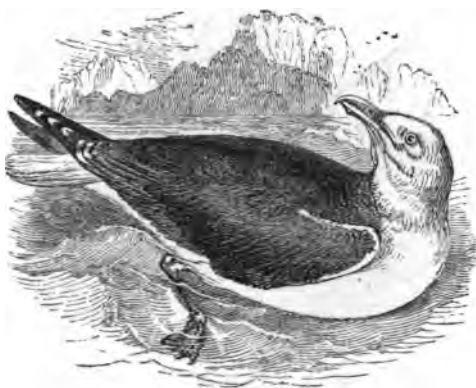
THE GOOSE.

It is common to call a silly and stupid person a Goose, which is rather unfair to the poor fowl; for in a wild state the Goose is quick and clever. The Wild Geese fly very high, in large flocks, so that they escape a gun shot, rarely descend to rest during the day, and at night keep watch lest they should be surprised. They always fly in regular order, in the form of the letter V, with the point first; and when the Goose that leads, and cuts the way against the resistance of the air is tired, it falls back into the line, and another takes its place. The Tame Goose is a very useful fowl; its quills are made into pens, its small feathers and down into beds, and the Goose, when roasted at Michaelmas, is a favourite dish. The creature will show great attachment to people who are kind to it, and even to Dogs. The Goose sleeps so lightly that it is easily roused; it sees at a great distance, and hears the least sound. If a thief on two, or on four legs, were to attempt to enter the poultry-yard, the Goose would sound an alarm. And history tells us that Rome was saved by the watchful Geese waking the guard when the enemy were unheard at the gates.



THE DUCK.

THE awkward, waddling, dirty, greedy Duck, is something like the Hog in habits, and almost as useless, till it is set on the table. It loves to plunge in the mud, and to feast on offal that no other animal, except the Hog, would touch. The poor man keeps Ducks, because it costs him nothing to feed them, and they want no shelter but an open shed. The Duck lays a good many eggs, but is too fond of rambling to hatch them well. It often leaves the eggs before they are hatched; and even after they are out of the shell, takes no care of its young. Hence the eggs are often hatched by a Hen, which is very fond of the Ducklings, and in great terror when she sees them run into the water. The Wild Duck, or Mallard, from the stock of which our Tame Duck came, is a bird of splendid plumage; it is shy and wary, living in lonely marshes, and can only be caught by means of a Tame Duck, called a Decoy Duck, which is taught to lure it into a sort of trap.



THE GULL.

THERE are several kinds of Gulls, always found in flocks, and on the sea-shore, and as they are web-footed, they swim with great ease ; but are not divers. The Common Gull forms its nest on the face of some high rock ; it is made of long grass and sea-weed, and contains commonly two eggs, about the size of those of the Hen, of a dark olive colour, mottled with red. Large flocks of Gulls may always be seen near the coast, flying through the air with loud and harsh screams ; skimming over the waves to feed on the fish, or at low water standing on the shore picking up dead fish, even if putrid, slugs, worms, or any animal substance. When the weather is about to become stormy, the Gulls often fly from the coast inland. The Herring Gull, which has a great taste for Herrings, always appears before the shoals of that fish visit our coast, and therefore the fishermen are glad to see the bird that brings good tidings.



THE CONDOR.

OF all birds the Condor is the most frightful and disgusting. It lives on the Andes, the lofty snow-covered mountains of South America, where it lays its two white eggs on the bare rock, many thousand feet above the plains. It feeds on the flesh of all animals; if it cannot meet with them dead, it attacks a living Calf, a Llama, or even a Puma. Its claws are not formed to carry off its prey, so it tears the poor victim to pieces, and feasts on its flesh till it cannot move. It is then often taken by the Indians with a strong lasso, or noose, which they fling round its neck. The Condor is the largest bird of flight; its wings when spread will measure fourteen feet across. On the head is a sort of comb, and the neck is covered with a bare, red wrinkled skin, which looks very frightful when the bird is gorged.



THE VULTURE.

THE Vulture differs from the Eagle in its bare head and throat, and in its filthy habits. The Griffon Vulture is found in all the warmer regions of Europe, Asia, and Africa; it is the largest bird of prey of the Old World, and is known by a broad ruff of white feathers round its neck. Flocks of these birds may be seen sitting on the heights of mountains to watch for some dead carcass, or sailing round in their graceful flight over the desert to watch for some poor Camel to fall down and die, when they pounce down on the prey, and eat till the whole is consumed. These birds are rarely destroyed, for they are very useful in clearing away the carrion, which might taint the air. They build in the rocks, and lay three or four greyish white eggs, spotted with red.



THE GOLDEN EAGLE.

THE Eagle is always called the King of Birds, from its noble look, its lofty flight, far above that of any other bird, and the great power of its talons, with which it can carry off a Sheep, nor will it ever give up its prey but with its life. These long talons are, however, very much in its way when it attempts to walk. It is said that young children have been carried away by the Eagle, which makes it much dreaded in those parts which it is known to frequent. It builds a nest on some lofty rock, of branches of trees, interwoven with smaller twigs, and lined with rushes, and lays three eggs of dusky colour, spotted with green. The eye of the Golden Eagle is bright and piercing, and when perched, the bird has an air of majesty. In defence of its young the Eagle will attack any animal, or even man himself.



THE PEREGRINE FALCON.

FALCONS are very common in all parts of the world, and are easily trained to hunt game and bring it to their master. In the days when Falconry, or Hawking, was in fashion, the Peregrine Falcon was a favourite bird, and was called the Gentle Falcon. Its flight is very swift; it soars to a great height, and then darts down on its prey, stunning it with the blow before it seizes and carries it off in its strong claws. The Falcon is one of the nobler birds of prey: it never attacks but when pressed by hunger, and then only living animals. It is bold and powerful, and will wage war with the strong Heron, which sometimes pierces it with its sharp beak. The Falcon may be known by its feathered head and neck, and by its sunken eye. It builds on the ledges of rocks, and lays four eggs of a reddish-brown colour.



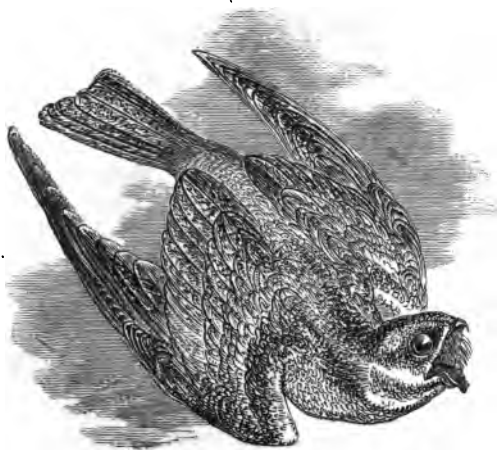
THE SECRETARY-BIRD.

THIS odd-looking bird, with the tuft of long, dark feathers at the back of its head, which it can raise when it pleases, is the Secretary-bird, a native of Africa and the Philippine Islands. It feeds only on Snakes and reptiles, and is therefore named by the Hottentots the Serpent-eater. It is rather like the Falcon in form, but has long legs like the Crane; and its wings are so strong that when it attacks its prey, it uses one wing spread out as a shield before it, and with the other strikes the Serpent till it is not able to move. Then, with a blow of its sharp beak, it opens the head of its victim, and goes on to devour it. It has a greedy appetite, and will eat a vast number of Snakes and Lizards in a day. The plumage of the Secretary is grey, and the legs are feathered to the feet. It builds on high trees, and lays three eggs, nearly white.



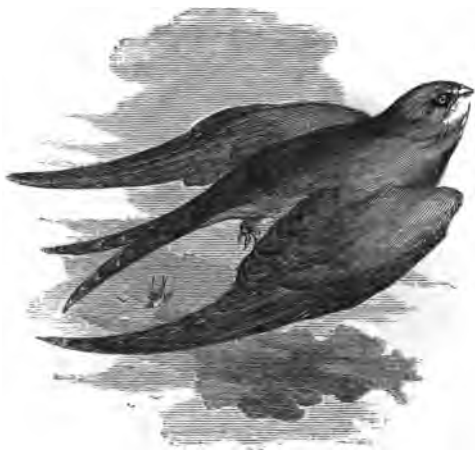
THE SNOWY OWL.

THE Snowy Owl is the most beautiful of its tribe, and is found only in the cold northern parts of the world, where it is very well known, for it does not shut itself up all day like its dark-feathered relations, but flies about all over, to seek its food, which consists of birds, beasts, fishes, or any other delicacy of the season, dead or living, that it can meet with. It is a very good fisher, darting its claws into the water, and very seldom failing to secure its victim. It follows the hunter closely in his progress, and if he shoots any game, he must be quick, or he will see it devoured before his eyes. The soft, thick plumage of this bird is of a snowy hue, streaked across with brown, and the bill and claws are black. It makes a nest on the ground, and lays four reddish-brown eggs, of which seldom more than two are hatched.



THE GOATSUCKER.

THE Goatsucker is one of a tribe of birds known by the curious shape of the mouth, which is well suited for catching the insects on which it feeds, and which is somewhat like the mouth of the Frog. The food of this bird consists of the Moths and Beetles, which fill the air on the summer evenings. It catches them on the wing in its open mouth, which is fringed with a sort of bristles to prevent the insects from escaping after they have entered. The Goatsucker is common all over Europe; it comes to England in May, and leaves before the winter. It is rarely seen in the day, but at night it wings its soft silent flight in circles, feeding as it flies, and only when perched utters its odd, harsh cry. It makes no nest, but lays two brown and white mottled eggs on the ground, among grass or fern.



THE SWIFT.

THE Swift is the largest and swiftest of the Swallow tribe; its plumage is a dull black, except the throat, which is white; the wings are very long, and the legs short, so that it does not easily rise from the ground; but it usually spends the whole day on the wing, feeding as it flies, and swallowing a vast number of insects. Its flight is very bold, and it rises so high as to be sometimes almost out of sight; but its shrill scream is still heard. The Swift builds in steeples and high towers, around which, on a summer evening, flocks of the birds may be seen wheeling, and screaming loudly. In autumn these birds leave England for a warmer climate, and never return before the end of April.



THE ROLLER.

THE Roller is only seen now and then in England, but is plentifully found in most parts of Europe, and is much admired and valued for the beauty of its plumage; the flesh also is very delicate. The brilliant feathers of this pretty bird are bright brown, tinged with blue and green, and its curious fan-like tail is of a light blue colour. The legs are very short, the upper part of the bill is bent over the lower, and at the root has bristles, something like the whiskers of the Cat, which, it is thought, assist the bird to secure the insects on which it feeds. It lives in thick forests, and is very seldom seen; its nest is built in a bank or hollow tree, and in general contains six or seven eggs. Its length is about thirteen inches.



THE KINGFISHER.

THE Kingfisher is one of the most brilliant of the English birds ; the plumage is tinted with bright blue, green and orange ; and when sailing through the air on a sunny day, the Kingfisher may compare with many of the richly-coloured foreign birds. It lives by the side of ponds or rivers, where it flits over the water to feed on small Fish, Leeches, or Water-beetles, and will sit for hours on a stone or low branch by the stream, watching for its prey. Its habits are by no means clean or delicate ; it disgorges its food, not only to feed its young, but from this half-digested mass it makes a dirty sort of nest, in some hole by the water, where it lays six eggs of a pinkish white colour. Like many other pretty birds, the Kingfisher has not a musical voice ; its cry is loud, harsh, and rattling.



THE BEE-EATER.

THE Bee-eater is found in many parts of Europe, Asia, and America, but is seldom seen in England. It is known by its long wings, its brilliant plumage of blue, yellow and green, by its long curved bill, and its harsh, unpleasant voice. The Bee-eater, as its name declares, is a great foe to the Bees, on which it chiefly feeds, though it will also eat Wasps, Butterflies, Flies, and Gnats, or if insects cannot be found, it will content itself with seeds. In some countries this bird is caught, like a fish, by angling for it, with a Bee fixed upon a hook. It builds a nest of moss in some deep hole on the banks of a pond or river, and lays five or six white eggs.



THE HOOPOE.

THE Hoopoe is a very beautiful and curious bird, found in many parts of the world, very common in France, but very rarely seen in England. The elegant crest that adorns its head is two inches high, of a pale orange colour, tipped with black; and when the bird is alarmed it raises this crest quite erect. It is always seen alone, and utters a strange, low, sad cry, *Hoo-poe*, which it repeats three or four times over, and from this cry it has its name. It feeds on the insects it finds in decayed trees, which it bruises and makes into a paste before it swallows them. It builds a nest of grass, lined with feathers, in a hollow tree, and lays five or six grey eggs, spotted with brown.



HUMMING-BIRDS.

THE prettiest creature of the feathered race is the Humming-bird, which flutters about in the gardens and wild woods of America like a moving flower, or precious stone, so brilliant and so rich is its plumage. It is not much larger than the Bee, and lives, like that insect, on the honey it sucks from the flowers, by means of its slender hooked bill and long split tongue. It feeds also on the very small insects which live in the cups of the flowers. There are many kinds of Humming-birds; but all are brilliant creatures, and all hover over the flowers to suck the juice, making a humming sound with their wings. The nest of this bird is very curious, not being larger than a walnut, lined with cotton or down, and covered with moss the colour of the branch on which it is fixed so neatly that it looks like a mossy knot in the wood.



THE NUTHATCH.

THE Nuthatch is one of the Creepers, known by their slender bill, which is used to pick insects from the bark of the tree, and their claws, fitted to run up and down the trunk, which they do very well either with the head or heels uppermost. The Nuthatch hoards nuts in the hollow of a tree, and when it wants to feed, brings out one, fixes it in some crevice in the tree, then breaks it with a stroke of its bill, and eats the kernel ; and beneath the tree where the bird has its store, a heap of nutshells may always be seen. It makes a rude nest in the hollow of a tree, and if the entrance be too large, fills up a part with mud ; there it lays six or seven eggs of a dusky colour, spotted with brown. The Nuthatch is so restless in its habits that it cannot bear confinement, but will peck at its cage to try to escape till it dies.



THE NIGHTINGALE.

THE Nightingale may well be called the Queen of Song; its notes are so varied and sweet, and so powerful, that the song may be plainly heard at the distance of half a mile. It sings only in the still evening, when all other birds are silent, and its wonderful music never fails to charm even the rudest ear. Like all the birds gifted with song, the Nightingale is plain in plumage; it is of a tawny-brown colour, the under part being white; the eyes are of a hazel colour, very large and bright. In England it is rarely heard so far north as Yorkshire, and in winter it always flies off to seek a warmer climate. It builds a nest on the ground beneath a hedge, of leaves, straw and grass, and lays four or five olive brown eggs.



THE BLACKCAP.

FROM May to October this little cheerful warbler is heard in England, but after that it flies to warmer shores. It is called the English Nightingale from the power, the variety, and the sweetness of its notes; and from its habit of imitating all other song-birds, it has also been named the English Mocking-bird. It is called the Blackcap from the black patch on the crown of its head. The plumage of the neck and back is greyish green, the lower parts are an ash colour; the upper part of the bill is dark, and the under part light blue. The Blackcap is often seen in gardens; it feeds on insects and berries, and in some low bush builds a nest of dried stalks, moss and hair, in which it lays five reddish brown eggs, with dark spots.



THE REDSTART.

THE Redstart visits us only for the summer; it leaves in September, and does not return till April. Its plumage is pretty, being varied with blue, black, and white; and the tail, which it has a curious habit of shaking when it is perched, is bright red. It is often heard warbling its sweet notes in gardens, or on some tall tree on the village green, and continues its song even when it is on the wing. It feeds on insects and Ants' eggs, and will often peck the ripe fruit. It builds in some old wall covered with ivy, or in a hollow tree, a nest of moss, lined with hair, and lays five or six pretty blue eggs. The Redstart is often kept as a cage-bird; it sings very prettily in its prison, and learns the song of any other bird near it.



THE LONG-TAILED TITMOUSE.

ALL the Tits are known by their active, playful habits, twisting round and hanging on the branches of the trees, sometimes head downward, all day long ; sometimes darting after insects, sometimes plucking buds to seek the worm or caterpillar within them, and vexing the gardener by sporting in the fruit-trees. The Long-tailed Tit is very beautiful ; its plumage is a mixture of grey and rose colour, and it builds one of the most curious and pretty nests of any of our English birds. This nest is oval in form, very large, and has only a small hole left for an entrance ; the outside is covered with lichens of the colour of the branch where it is placed, and it is lined with soft feathers ; it will often contain twelve or fourteen small white eggs with delicate spots of grey.



THE DIPPER.

THE Dipper, or Water Ouzel, is found only in hilly places, near rapid streams. Its plumage is brown, the wings black and grey, and the throat and breast white. It feeds on water-insects and small fish, for which it dives boldly, though it is not web-footed, and in winter always seeks some rapid stream that does not freeze. It has a curious habit of dipping and rising; and even walking along at the bottom of the water when in search of Minnows, almost as well as it walks on land. It builds a nest of dry plants, twined with moss, and lined with oak leaves; this nest is hidden with great care among the stones by the water side; it has only a small hole left for an entrance, and contains five pure white eggs.



THE FIELDFARE.

THE Fieldfare is one of our winter visitors ; it loves the cold weather, and only comes to us in October, to leave us at the end of February for Norway or Sweden. This bird is such delicate food, that numbers are killed during the winter for the table. It feeds on berries commonly, but sometimes on worms and slugs ; and a whole flock may be seen spread over a field in search of food, when they always have one bird placed as a watch, to sound an alarm if danger be at hand. The plumage of the Fieldfare is something like that of the Thrush ; the back dark, the under part white, and the head and neck ash colour, with black spots. It builds in high fir or pine-trees, and lays five or six eggs of a sea-green colour, with red spots.



THE MOCKING-BIRD.

No bird has such a wonderful power of voice as the Mocking-bird of America. Its own natural song is full, rich, and bold ; but, not content with this gift, it mimics, without being taught like the Parrot, not only the song of every warbler of the woods, but the human voice ; the cry of every animal, the crow of the Cock, the bark of the Dog, and it even repeats, as soon as it hears it, the sound of wheels, or the still more harsh grating of the saw. Thus the little bird will sit alone on a tree, and deceive the listener by filling the wood with varied sounds. The Mocking-bird is about the size of the Thrush, of a grey colour, with the wings and tail tipped with white ; the eye is large and bright. It builds in bushes, or apple-trees, often close to houses, and no one molests the amusing Mocking-bird.



THE GREAT SHRIKE.

THE Shrikes are also called Butcher Birds, from their manner of killing their prey. The Great Shrike feeds on Mice, Birds, Frogs, or any small animals, on which it pounces from some hiding-place, destroys them with a blow of its strong curved bill, and then carries off its prey and impales it on a thorn. After this it returns to its sport, kills more victims, and carries them all to the same place; then tears them to pieces, and eats them at its leisure. It is so greedy and bold, that it will attack a bird larger than itself, and die rather than give up the battle. Sometimes it will imitate the notes of the smaller birds, to lure them near, that it may prey on them. It builds on a tree a nest of moss and grass, lined with wool, and lays six white eggs, spotted with brown at the broad end.



THE JACKDAW.

ANY one who has lived near a steeple or a ruined tower may have noticed a whole colony of Jackdaws, at the dawn of day, perched on the battlements, each beside his mate, holding a noisy debate about the prospect of the weather, before they set out to hunt for food. At length, if all promises well, they fly off, and do not return till evening; but if the sky be cloudy and dark, they flutter about, chatter a great deal, shake their large, wise-looking grey heads, and stay at home. The walls of that old tower will be thronged with nests, built of sticks and lined with wool, each containing five greenish eggs, spotted with brown. The Jackdaw is a greedy eater, feeding on anything it can pick up, Insects, Mice, fruit, and even the eggs of other birds.



THE BIRD OF PARADISE.

No bird in this world can equal this in beauty, and therefore it has been named the Bird of Paradise. No lady dressed for court was ever half so splendid as this creature, with its rich deep brown plumage, its bright golden green throat, and its long train of soft yellow downy feathers, with the two curious long, thread-like middle feathers of the tail. In New Guinea, and many of the islands of the Indian Ocean, this lovely bird is seen all day floating in the air, and seldom resting except on the top of the highest trees, where it feeds on insects and fruits. These birds are of much value for ladies to wear in their hair, and thus their beautiful plumage exposes them to the danger of being shot by the natives, who commonly use blunt arrows for this purpose.



THE BALTIMORE ORIOLE.

THE beautiful Oriole of America is known everywhere for the very curious nest it makes. This is woven of hemp, flax, hair, and wool; it is shaped like a purse, only it is nearly covered, but a very small hole being left for an entrance, and this nest is hung at the point of a slender branch of a tree, so that no robber could reach it without breaking the branch. All this care, it is thought, is in order to keep out the Black Snake, which has a fancy for preying on young birds. The plumage of the Oriole is very brilliant; the colours are black, red, and yellow; and the people of Maryland, where the bird is common, say it was named Baltimore, because the colours of its feathers were those in the livery of Lord Baltimore, the first English settler in that state. The notes of this Oriole are very clear, plaintive, and pleasing.



THE STARLING.

THE Starling is one of our best known birds, from its lively, social habits, its graceful form, its glossy, purple-black plumage speckled with white, and its yellow bill. Starlings live in large flocks, and are so fond of companions that they will join the Fieldfares, or even the Owl, rather than live alone. They fly in a curious but very regular manner, wheeling round in circles, but still moving forward with all the order of a body of soldiers at drill. This bird builds a nest of dry grass in an old tower, wall, or decayed tree, and lays five pale blue eggs. It feeds on insects and worms; in pursuit of which it is often seen in the pastures and corn-fields. It is often kept as a house bird; its own voice, though curious, is not unpleasant; but it readily mimics the human voice, and will repeat words and sentences well.



THE LINNET.

THE little, plain Brown Linnet is one of the most pleasing of the English song-birds. It is shy and wild, but at all times of the year among the hills you may hear the sweet notes of this bird from the thickets. It is found in all parts of Europe, and in England great numbers are caught and sold to be kept in cages, where they soon learn the song of the Canary, the Goldfinch, or any bird they hear. The favourite food of this bird is the seed of flax, or linseed, from which taste it has got its name. The Linnet builds in the midst of a low bush, very near the ground; the nest is very neat, made of moss and grass, and lined with hair, and it commonly contains five bluish-white eggs, spotted with grey and brown. It is a very clean bird, fond of bathing in clear streams, and often dressing its feathers.



THE CANARY-BIRD.

THE Canary-bird, first brought to England, some centuries ago, from the Canary Islands, is a well-known pet cage bird. In its native woods, its plumage is grey, but in a domestic state the feathers are white, brown, green, or more commonly, the pale yellow which is known as Canary colour. In its wild state this bird has a loud and sweet song; but the tame bird is always taught by a flute or bird organ, the notes of which it carefully imitates, as well as the song of other birds. It is the most cheerful of song-birds, singing at all seasons, and always most noisy when in the midst of company. It is very docile, may be taught to perform tricks; it will hop about the room, feed from the table, and caress its friends, very gracefully.



THE TOUCAN.

YOU might easily suppose that this strange, huge bill had been fitted on the pretty head of the Toucan for a frolic, and did not belong to it. But it is the real bill of the bird, and is not quite so heavy as it looks, or it might break even the stout, short neck of the Toucan to carry it about. It is a native of South America, and the plumage is very pretty; the upper part black, the throat and breast orange, and the lower part and some of the tail feathers red. It builds in a hole in a tree, and lays two eggs, which it guards with great care from its great enemy, the Monkey; and if the thief happens to visit the nest when the bird is sitting, the large beak appears from the hole, and drives away the robber screaming and wounded. The Toucan feeds on fruits, and on young birds, which it tears to pieces and devours.



THE MACAW.

THE Parrot tribes are found in all the warmer parts of the world ; they differ from other birds in the form of their sharp crooked talons, and in the manner in which both the upper and lower parts of the curved beak move as if on hinges. The claws and beak are useful to the birds in their habit of climbing trees. The blue and yellow Macaw is one of the prettiest of the Parrots ; the upper part of the body is of a deep blue colour, and the under part red. It lives in the woods of South America and feeds on fruits. No bird is so easily taught to imitate the sound of the human voice, and it will utter words and sentences so perfectly as to deceive any listener. It will also learn with great correctness any noise it usually hears,—the railway whistle, the postman's horn, or any strange sound, and for its beauty and amusing habits is always a favourite in the family circle.



THE COCKATOO.

THE Cockatoo, or Crested Parrot, is a native of the islands of the Indian Ocean. It lives among the marshes by the side of streams, feeds upon seeds and kernels, and loves to bathe in the water; it builds in hollow trees, or in rocks. Its plumage is a soft and snowy white, except that it wears on its head a crest of long pale yellow feathers which it can erect or depress at its pleasure. It has a black beak and a bare circle round the eyes. Its constant cry is *Cock-a-too*, from whence it derives its name; but, like the rest of the Parrots, it can be taught to speak words and sentences. The Cockatoo is a beautiful bird when its elegant crest is erected; it is often kept as a pet, and it is said it will live for a hundred years. The length of the bird is about eighteen inches.



THE PASSENGER PIGEON.

IN all the history of birds we read of nothing more strange than the wonderful flight of the Passenger Pigeon of America, which moves more than a mile in a minute, and in such immense flocks that in autumn, when they are seeking a warmer climate, they may be seen for five or six hours together passing over a district, and the air will be darkened with them for some miles in width. If it was not for this rapid motion, they would lay waste the country where they rested. In the spring these Pigeons build on the tops of high trees, in wide forests; one tree will sometimes contain a hundred nests, and the branches will break down with the weight. For miles round all vegetation will be destroyed by these birds, which feed on all kinds of forest fruit, and devour large quantities of corn and rice.



THE QUAIL.

THE Quail is a bird of travel ; we see it in England only during the summer ; in August or September immense flocks of these birds leave us for Africa and Arabia. They usually make their flight in the night, and such numbers have been known to alight on the west coast of Naples while they were migrating, that as many as a hundred thousand have been taken in a day within a few miles. The Quail is much like the Partridge, but rather smaller, and the tail is shorter ; it has grey, spotted feathers, and over each eye, and down the face, a yellow line. As the Quail is very delicate food, numbers are caught every year, and sold by the poulterers. They feed on grain, and often rise in flocks from the stubble, making the same whirring sound as the Partridge. It makes a rude nest on the ground, and lays eight or ten white eggs, spotted with brown.



THE CAPERCAILLIE.

THE Capercaillie, or Cock of the Woods, is one of the Grouse kind, as large as the Turkey. It was some time ago common in Scotland, but is now only found in the forests of Russia, Norway, and Sweden, where it feeds on the young pine-cones, and the fruits of the birch and juniper. Its plumage is of mixed black, grey, and white, and the breast a beautiful golden green. Early in the spring this bird may be seen sitting on a tree enjoying what is called its *play*. It utters a curious cry, *Peller, peller*, so long and so quickly, that it quite loses breath, at the same time closing its eyes, and throwing its head back in a very strange manner. At this time it is not difficult to approach the bird. The Capercaillie makes a nest on the ground, and lays ten or twelve eggs, which are thought more delicate than those of any other fowl.



THE PEACOCK.

THOUGH the Peacock cannot be called a British bird,—for it was first brought to Europe from the East,—yet for centuries it has been the pride of the poultry-yard. The neck feathers vary from deep blue to light green, and when the proud bird erects the splendid feathers that form the train, it has really a noble look. In old times the Peacock was the chief dish at every great feast, being always served up in its fine feathers. Its voice, however, is a harsh scream, and it has the character of being a bad father, and very cruel to its young chicks.



THE OSTRICH.

THE Ostrich is the largest known bird of the world. It lives, like the Camel, in the sandy deserts of Africa, and feeds on coarse grass, or any other scattered herbage it can find, and to assist this rough food to digest, it swallows now and then a few pebbles. Though the Ostrich, like other birds, has wings, it only uses them as sails, as they could not support its great weight in the air. All its power is in its legs, which are very long and strong; and when it spreads its wings to help its pace, it can run swifter than the fleetest race-horse. It has a small bald head, very large bright eyes, a long neck, and a tail of very great value, for it is adorned with the plumes so dear to ladies and to soldiers.



THE CASSOWARY.

THE Cassowary, like the Ostrich, is a large and powerful bird, which is not able to fly, but can run very swiftly, and when pursued will defend itself by kicking backward or forward, often giving very severe and fatal blows. The plumage of this bird is black, and looks very like hair, for from the same root there are two long thin feathers grow. It has no tail, and the wings are very short. The head and neck are bare, of a bright blue colour in the upper, and red in the lower part; and for a crest it wears a dark horny substance, like a helmet. It is a native of the East part of Asia, and in that rich country it feeds on fruits and roots, of which it devours an immense quantity. It scratches a hole in the light soil for a nest, and lays three or four eggs of a green colour.



THE EMEU.

THE Emeu is one of the strange birds found in the new country of Australia. It is five or six feet high, and not unlike the Ostrich of Africa; but more clumsy in form. It is covered with brown and grey mottled, hair-like feathers, like the coat of some wild beast; its neck is bare and of a purple colour; and the legs are so strong that the bird will often kick the Greyhounds to death that are used to hunt it. The flesh is eaten by the natives; the hind quarters are thought very good, rather like beef, but more delicate; and from its fat a great deal of oil is made, which is used for burning in lamps and other purposes. The Emeu is very wild and shy, but may be easily tamed. The cry is a low booming sound; the eggs, of which there are about seven, are of a dark green colour, and are much liked by the natives, who almost live on them in the hatching season.



THE APTERYX.

TRAVELLERS who have ventured into the wild, unknown parts of Australia have seen many new animals, all of which have been quite unlike those of other countries. Amongst those which have really been brought to this country, the most curious is the Apteryx, called by the natives *Kiwi-Kiwi*. It is quite without wings, and the nostrils are placed nearly at the end of the very long bill, the tip of which it has a habit of placing on the ground when it rests. The bird is covered with soft, hair-like feathers, which are never plucked out, but the whole skin is used for the dresses of the chiefs. The legs are very strong and powerful, and are used to defend it from the Dogs that hunt it; and also to strike the ground, to force up the worms on which it feeds. It makes its nest in caves in the rock, or it digs holes in the earth, in which it hides when pursued.



THE DODO.

THOUGH the picture of the Dodo is still preserved, the bird itself can no longer be found. We have very good accounts of its appearance written by several travellers who saw it, more than a hundred years ago, in the islands of the Indian Ocean. Since that time no one has seen it; but it is hoped it may still exist in some of the large tracts of those islands which have never yet been explored. The head, foot, and other relics, may be seen in a museum at Oxford, and a painting of it from life is in the British Museum. It is described to have had bright eyes, legs like the Turkey, a round body and short wings, but to have been very graceful in its movement. The nest was made on a clear spot of ground, of palm leaves, and contained one egg, larger than that of the Goose.



THE GREAT BUSTARD.

LIKE many of our large birds, the Great Bustard is now very seldom seen in England, though it was at one time very common. Its legs are long, and its wings short, and it therefore prefers running to flying, and is even hunted down by Greyhounds, without rising from the ground. This bird has a curious bag or pouch, which hangs half-way down the neck, before the throat; it is open under the tongue, and large enough to contain several quarts of water; but as the bird could not well run with such a load, it is thought by many, that the Bustard fills this bag with air to assist it in running. It lives on wide heaths, and feeds on berries, earth-worms, and green corn; the flesh is considered very delicate. The bird makes a nest on the ground of a heap of straw, and lays two dusky eggs, spotted with brown.



THE LAPWING.

THE Lapwing, or Peewit, as it is sometimes called from the sound of its curious cry, is one of the Plovers, a tribe well known by their long legs and wings. It is a pretty, lively, active bird, always running and leaping about on the ground, or sporting in the air, crying out *Pee-wit!* The head and the elegant crest are black, the back green, glossed with blue, and the lower parts snowy white. In some hollow of the ground the Lapwing places a few dried stalks, and lays four or five brown eggs, spotted with black, and as soon as the young are hatched, the bird tries every means to save them from danger. It runs to some distance, affects to be lame, then rises from the ground with loud cries, and flies away from the nest to decoy the intruders to leave it. It feeds on worms, which it obtains by striking the ground with its foot, and when the worm comes up in alarm, it seizes and swallows it.



THE CRANE.

THE Crane, which was once common in England, is now no longer seen here. In summer it is found in most of the northern parts of Europe, but migrates in the winter to Egypt or India. Cranes live in large flocks in marshes, where they can easily find the small Frogs and Worms on which they feed. One of the flock is always placed as a watch, while the rest sleep, with their heads tucked under their wings; the sentinel alone holds his head up, and gives a loud cry if danger be near. These birds fly so high that sometimes they are almost out of sight, though their hoarse cry may be heard. They fly in the form of a triangle, each taking its turn to lead, and cut the air for the rest. The Crane makes a nest among reeds and rushes, and lays two bluish-green eggs.



THE BITTERN.

THIS is one of the large birds which were common in England in the time when hawking was in fashion, and was often the game sought by the Falcon. It is now very rare. It lives in marshes, sitting all day hid among the reeds, above which it can raise its long neck, and see if danger be near. At night it rises from its retreat, soars to a very great height, and booms out its dismal, hollow cry, which is more like the bellow of a Bull than the note of a Bird, and has a very solemn sound in the darkness of night. The plumage of the Bittern is a rich red brown colour, mottled with black; in summer it feeds on Frogs and Fish; and in autumn seeks the woods to feast on Mice, which it swallows whole. It builds a nest of reeds in the marsh, and lays five greenish eggs.



THE SPOONBILL.

THE Spoonbill takes its name from the very curious shape of its bill. It is most commonly found about the lakes of Africa, and is often seen on the coast of the Cape of Good Hope. It is a migratory bird, and sometimes, but very seldom, has been known to visit the coast of England. It is often seen in fens and marshes, or in large flocks by the shores of the sea or a river, which fill the air with loud cries like a colony of Rooks. It feeds on Fishes, Worms, Snails, and water-plants, and is very fond of Frogs, which it catches with great skill in its wide bill. The plumage of the Spoonbill is white; but the chin, the bill, and the legs are black. It builds on the highest trees, near the coast, and at the mouth of rivers, and lays three white eggs, with a few pale red spots.



THE STORK.

THE Stork is one of the birds which, like the Robins, are under the protection of man. This is, probably, from its gentle and familiar habits, and from the great services it does in destroying reptiles. In Holland, where the marshes bring forth so many Frogs, they would become a pest, if the flocks of useful Storks did not devour them. In that country these birds are much loved and valued; they build their nests on the tops of the houses, play with the children of the family, walk about the streets without fear, and, after migrating for the winter, they return to their old nests, which have been preserved for them with great care. The plumage of the Stork is white, except the quill feathers of the wings, which are black. It lays two pale yellow eggs, and when its young are hatched, is such a tender parent, that it will die rather than forsake them.



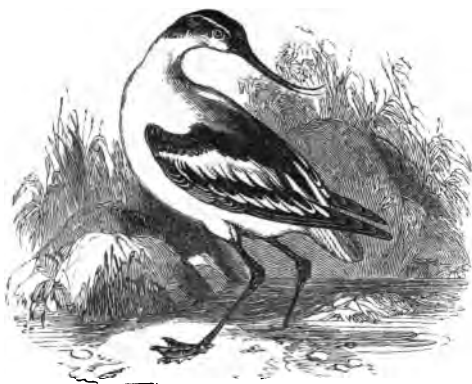
THE SACRED IBIS.

THIS bird, we know by the sculptures on the tombs of Egypt, and by the mummies found within them, was honoured and even worshipped by the ancient Egyptians. It was for some time thought to have been quite lost, till Bruce the traveller declared that he had seen it on the banks of the Nile, where it was called by the people "Father John." After this, some French travellers brought the bird over to Cuvier, the great naturalist, who knew it to be the Ibis that is found with the mummies in the tombs. This bird feeds on the reptiles which are left on the shore when the waters of the Nile subside, but does not stay to build its nest in Egypt, and after the inundation is past, takes its flight.



THE CURLEW.

THE Curlew is a well-known bird, haunting the sea-coasts of all parts of Europe and Asia, where it may be seen running about on the sandy beach, turning over the weed with its long bill, to seek for the insects, worms, and small shell-fish on which it feeds. The note of the Curlew is a sort of whistling sound, from which it has obtained its name; and as these birds always fly in flocks, crying without ceasing, the noise is far from pleasant. The plumage of the Curlew is pretty; the upper parts grey and white, lined with brown, the breast and lower parts white, and the tail grey, with bands of brown. In the early part of the summer the bird leaves the coast for lonely heath-covered mountains, where it builds a nest under the heath, of grass and rushes, and lays four olive-coloured eggs with brown spots.



THE AVOCET.

THE Avocet is one of a tribe of birds known by having the bill curved upwards, instead of downwards, as in most of the birds with curved bills. It is one of the Waders; and, its feet being partly webbed, it is able to swim a little. It is fond of plunging in the water, to scoop up with its long bill the small worms and insects on which it feeds. It is often found on the east coast of England, among marshes and fens, where it makes a nest in some shallow hollow in the earth, and lays two olive-coloured eggs, spotted with black; the plumage of this bird is black and white, and the legs are bluish grey. Avocets feed in flocks, and if any alarm is heard, they fly off, with their necks stretched forward, and their long legs standing out behind, filling the air with their curious twittering cries.



THE WOODCOCK.

THE Woodcock is found only in the north of Europe. It is common in England, which it visits in October, and is much sought by sportsmen, for the flesh is then most delicate; it leaves in March, when the flesh is become coarse, and seeks a climate farther north. It hides during the day in thick bushes, and goes out at night to seek its food in marshes or moist places; it feeds on insects and on worms, which it digs out of the ground with its long bill, and of which it devours an immense number. The plumage of the Woodcock is prettily mingled with red, yellow, black, and grey, like the winter tints of the leaves amongst which it lives. It is very seldom known to breed in England; when it does, it makes a loose nest of sticks and hay at the foot of a tree, and lays four eggs of a yellowish brown, marked with darker brown.



THE RUFF.

THE female of the Ruff is called the Reeve, and she is without the curious ruff, or frill, round her neck, from which her mate takes his name. The feathers of this ruff, which appear in the spring, and fall off in winter, are of various bright colours, and often vary much in different birds. The Ruff seems to have its own private spot of ground, and if another bird of the same kind intrude on it, they fight in the most desperate manner; they will even suffer the bird-catcher to throw his nets over them rather than give up the battle. These birds when caught are fattened on bread and milk till they become almost round, and are then thought very good to eat. The Reeve lays four eggs on the ground, of greenish white marked with brown.

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